



DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO
Via della Pisana 1111 – 00163 Roma

Il Rettor Maggiore

Letter of the Rector Major in the International World Day of the Children's Rights

Dear Brothers and Dear Sisters, Salesians, members of the Salesian Family and young people engaged in volunteering,

On 20th November of each year, anniversary of the adoption in 1989 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), all around the world the International Day of Children's Rights is celebrated.

Since 2009, the 20th November is also an opportunity for all people of faith to celebrate the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC).

For the last three year I have been sending you a message inviting all to become active in this consistent interreligious initiative promoted by the Global Network of Religions for Children and supported by Arigatou International. It is a world initiative that unites religious communities and lay organizations to strengthen global efforts to stop violence against children.

This year, in the occasion of the 20th November, I would like to launch the following call to prayer and action: *"to promote the right to education of all children in the world as a means to fight and prevent child marriage"*.

The 2012 Report of the State of the World Population prepared by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) indicates that in the period 2000-2011 one third of women, aged between 20 and 24 years (around 67 million), married before they were 18 years old. 12% of them married before 15 years old. Child marriage is a form of violence against children and a violation of their human rights affecting all aspects of their lives. It hampers the enjoyment of childhood and adolescence as it hinders the possibility to continue studying. It also impacts on health, increasing the risk for sexual abuses and early pregnancies.

Girls with low educational levels encounter major risks of child marriage and, once married, most of them stop studying. On the contrary, girls and adolescents who have completed their secondary school have 6 times less chances of getting married before they are 18 years old. Therefore, education is one of the major strategies to protect girls and adolescents from early marriage.



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This year, I would like to invite you, on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, to promote actions, events, reflections and prayers in order to evidence publicly the engagement of the Salesian Family to fight against violence against children - in particular against child marriage - through prevention and education following the charisma of our Founder Don Bosco.

As I already mentioned to you the past years, I believe that only if we, the religious leaders, unite with the other people of faith in a joint effort, we can provide an adequate answer to the violations in the world of children's dignity and human rights.

While the Bicentennial of our Saint's birth is getting close, for us, the Salesian Family, it is necessary to retrace the path of Don Bosco, father and teacher of youth.

15 million children in 133 countries around the world is an extraordinary heritage that the Salesian Family holds in its hands. We recognize this with humbleness but also with consciousness. As Don Bosco at his time, we must be the leading actors of their salvation. Today we need to protect their dignity and warrant the enjoyment of their fundamental rights.

With the hope that the Salesian Communities will be capable of promoting strong alliances in this direction, for the creation of a new culture of human rights promotion and protection,

Pascual Chávez V.
Fr. Pascual Chávez V., SDB

Rector Major

